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**VIRGINIA LEGISLATIVE PAPERS.**

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FROM ORIGINALS IN THE VIRGINIA STATE ARCHIVES.

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CONTINUED.

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REPORTS OF COLNELS CHRISTIAN<sup>1</sup> AND LEWIS DURING  
THE CHEROKEE EXPEDITION, 1776.

Six Mile Camp, October 6th, 1776.

Honourable Sir:—

I have advanced six miles from Fort Patrick Henry which

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<sup>1</sup> In the early summer of 1776 a party of seven hundred Cherokees advanced against the Watauga and Holston settlements with the design of destroying everything as far as New River, but the men on Holston, on both sides of the Virginia line, hastily assembled, and, under the command of Captain Thompson, defeated the Indians in a hard-fought action at Long Island of Holston (Kingsport, Tenn.) About the same time the fort at Watauga was unsuccessfully attacked by the Cherokees, who, however, ravaged the settlements in various directions, killing one man and wounding others at the present site of Abingdon, Va. At the same time other bands of the tribe were raiding the frontiers of the Carolinas and Georgia. The States whose territories were endangered determined to strike such a severe blow at the Cherokees that they would no longer be a source of peril. In the summer of 1776 four expeditions were sent out by Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia. In August the North Carolina army, under General Griffith Rutherford, 2,400 strong, crossed the Blue Ridge at Swannanoa Gap and destroyed every Indian town—thirty-six in all—upon the Oconaluftee, Tuckasegee, the upper part of the Little Tennessee and Hiwassee. At Waya Gap, in the Nantahala Mountains, there was a hard fight, in which the Cherokees were repulsed; but the North Carolinians lost forty men.

On September 26th the South Carolina army, under Col. Andrew Williamson, 1,860 strong, joined Rutherford near the present Murphy, N. C. The South Carolinians had destroyed the lower Cherokee towns near the head of the Savannah River, and had several sharp fights.

In July the two hundred Georgians, under Col. Samuel Jack, had destroyed two towns at the head of the Chattahoochee and Tugaloo rivers.

The Virginia forces, after rendezvousing at the Long Island of Holston, followed the well known Indian war-path to the crossing of the French

Lieutenant Colonel Russell<sup>3</sup> has called the Fort at the great Island.<sup>4</sup> I will inclose you herewith a return of the Army with me, besides which about 100 men are left at the Fort to Guard the Stores there. Lieut. Colo. Morgan<sup>4</sup> of Colo. Lewis's Battalion is on his march with about 140 men officers included but I doubt is too far behind to have any probability of overtaking me.

I came to the Island on the 21 of September, since which time several parties of the Enemy have been about us; they killed one Soldier and one of the countrymen near the Island

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Broad, near the mouth of what is known as Dumplin Creek, and proceeded onwards to the towns on the Little Tennessee. The Island Town, the last point reached in the reports as far as here published, was about thirty miles from the present Knoxville, somewhat to the west of south. Not long after the date of Christian's last letter, printed above, the Cherokees begged for peace. This was granted on condition that all prisoners and captured stock were given up, and that as soon as the representatives of the tribes could meet in the spring all the disputed territory in the Tennessee settlements should be ceded to the whites.

Mooney (19th Annual Report, Bureau of Ethnology,) says: "The effect upon the Cherokees of this eruption of more than six thousand armed enemies into their territory was well nigh paralyzing. \* \* \* \* From the Virginia line to the Chattahoochee the chain of destruction was complete."

For accounts of these campaigns see Mooney, as above; Ramsey's *Tennessee*, pp. 150-159, and other authorities cited in Mooney's *Myths of the Cherokees*, 47-53. For Christian's expedition he only refers to Ramsey and Roosevelt (*Winning of the West*).

<sup>3</sup>William Russell, son of Col. William Russell, was born in Spotsylvania county in 1735. He was educated at William and Mary, served as a captain in the French and Indian War, and in 1770 removed to South-western Virginia. He was actively engaged in exploration and in the protection of the frontier. He was appointed Colonel of the 13th Virginia on December 19, 1779, transferred to the 5th Virginia September 14, 1778, taken prisoner at Charleston May 12, 1780, exchanged November, 1780, and served to November 3d, 1783; brevet Brigadier General November 3d, 1783. He died January 14th, 1793, and has many descendants. See *William Russell and His Descendants*.

<sup>4</sup>The Long Island of Holston, now in Tennessee. In 1760 Col. William Byrd, commanding Virginia forces, had built Fort Robinson here.

<sup>4</sup>This was probably Daniel Morgan. He was released on parole from his prison at Quebec in the summer of 1776, and it is likely had been duly exchanged by October.

and took another prisoner who escaped the second night after he was taken, but was not able to give me any information, more than, that the party were twelve in number and making homewards. Several of the country people have been also fired upon and some wounded since I came to Holston. The Enemy generally fire from behind Logs and bushes, and seldom at a greater distance than eight or ten steps; last tuesday three of them fired upon two men and broke one of their arms but they got away, nothing has been done since. I have no intelligence from Brigadier Rutherford<sup>b</sup> since his letter of the 27th of August. I will inclose you both his letters, and my answer to his first. The last I have not answered. If he is an enterprising man he may finish the Campaign before I get to the Indian Towns. The difficulty of marching from the valley Towns to the Overhills is not half so great as from Green Bryer to Point Pleasant.

I shall march in less than an hour and take with me 30 days flour and seventy days Beef. I hope to cross Broad river the 15th Instant where it is most likely I shall be attacked or meet with proposals of peace. The men who have fled from the Towns say that the Indians will surely fight desperately; which they promised Stewart<sup>c</sup> the King's Superitend't to do; and Camron his deputy who remains amongst them is daily encouraging them to defend their country against a parcel of Rebels. I Heartily wish that they may first attack me; and it is the wish of the Army. Camron being an awful man, may invent measures to delay our march if the Indians will execute them with dexterity, but still I have no doubt of returning to the Island in five weeks from this time; six at the farthest.

Yesterday I sent four of my Scouts to the Towns to endeavour to take a Prisoner, that I may know what the Enemy are doing,

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<sup>b</sup> Brigadier General Griffith Rutherford, of North Carolina, who was wounded and captured at the battle of Camden, August, 1780, and died December, 1799.

<sup>c</sup> John Stuart, who was prior to the Revolution General Agent and Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Southern Department of North America, used his utmost endeavors after the outbreak of the war to instigate the Indians to attack the revolting colonies.

but the attempt being new, and the probability of meeting some of them before they can reach the Towns so great, that I have but little hopes of success. I have promised the four men £100 if they succeed.

I have also sent another party of Scoutts, about Eighty miles from here & within fifty miles of the Towns to watch the path.

If anything new occurs at Broad river I shall send you an Express as speedily as possible. If I am attacked there and my march delayed I must send back to the Island for more Flour.

Mr. Madison<sup>7</sup> the Commissary in chief will write you fully about the Provisions, so that I will not trouble you and the Honourable Council on that head.

The people on Holston and Clinch from ten miles above Stalnakers<sup>8</sup> downwards are in Forts, the number of souls contained in them, I am told amounts to more than 3000 their distress is very great; I called at such as are upon the main road and found many in want of provisions, great numbers sick, and heard of many that had died; occasioned I suppose by their close confinement & being too much crowded together. I ventured to direct that a few loads of Flour should be distributed amongst the Wives and Widow mothers of those men who are with me, and gave orders to the Commissary to keep an account thereof, that the men may be called upon to pay for it, or such other steps taken therein as your Excellency and the Honourable Council shall please to direct.

In all Probability there will be more Flour than I shall want for the Expedition. It might prevent great distress if your Excellency and the Hon'ble Council would allow some of it to be sold to such of the Inhabitants as have lost their Crops by the War.

Lieut. Colo. Russell who was much disappointed, especially in the County of Fincastle about getting three hundred men or-

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas Madison, of Augusta county, was the paymaster of the Cherokee expedition. He was a son of John Madison and a brother of Bishop James Madison.

<sup>8</sup> The home of Samuel Stalnaker, on the Middle Fork of the Holston, a few miles above its junction with the South Fork, was long a famous place on the southwestern frontier. See this Magazine, XIII, 252, 253.

dered by the Convention; took into the service a great part of the men in the Forts; that step, and that alone, prevented the people from starving or getting out of the Country altogether.

I should have written your Excellency several times since I wrote to his honour the President, but I really did not know well what to say; I could not until within a week past speak with such certainty as I wished to do.

I am sir your most obedient

Humble Servant

WILLIAM CHRISTIAN.

[Directed]

Our Publick Service.

To His Excellency Patrick Henry, Esq'r,  
Governor of Virginia.

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Bank of Broad river,<sup>9</sup> October 14, 1776.

Hon'ble Sir:—

I am now encamped with the Army on the Bank of Broad river next the Cherokee Nation. On the 12th in the evening just before I was about to Encamp, a white man with a Flag met me about five miles from the river. He said that the Nation desired peace, and that the Raven Warrior of Chote in particular had sent him to desire he might speak to me & that he did not doubt but that we should agree in case I would treat upon reasonable terms. He told me moreover that the advanced parties were at my present camp and that the whole strength of the Nation were expected here that evening in order to oppose my crossing, which was easily to be done at this Foarding without great loss.

Yesterday about twelve O'clock I came to and formed my camp on the other side from where it was discovered there was Indians here. I sent up and down the river to search for foardings one was discovered above by our men seeing four Indians pass over, and Below a place unfrequented was found which it was supposed could be crossed at Ten O'clock at night I set off with betwixt

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<sup>9</sup> Broad River, on the French Broad, is a well-known and picturesque affluent of the Tennessee River, in the eastern part of the State of Tennessee.

ten and eleven hundred men, 200 of them mounted on Horses and by one o'clock in the morning got over with much danger and difficulty; the river being so Deep and rapid that none of the men could waid, the night was so very dark I was obliged frequently to make lights: the river about half a mile counting the several windings we were obliged to make. About an hour before day I marched within a mile of this spot where I expected the enemy were, and at Sunrise surrounded the place; but found no enemy. Upon this I ordered the remaining part of the Army with the Provisions and Baggage to be brought over, which is now effected.

At twelve o'clock the three men mentioned in my former letter returned; without a Prisoner, but with intelligence (but the manner of getting it, I must not now mention, least this may be mis-carried,) that the whole Force of the nation is now near me, with a determined resolution to attack me, and to skirmish at me from here to the Towns; aiming to destroy the Cattle & Horses and in obedience to Stuarts orders (now at Mobille) never to make peace; to Fight and retreat on. It appears also that the Flag was disapproved of by most of the Towns except three, under the influence of the Raven; that him his Broth. & Capt. Gist were here, when the white man was Sent home with the flag. I forgot above to mention my answer to the Raven's message, it was: How can he send to me for peace before he has delivered up Camron that enemy to white and red people. How can the Nation think of asking peace of me when they retain our Prisoners. How can they ask a peace when they have the assurance to assemble their men to Fight me, if they should dislike my terms. That I would cross the river and that I would Proceed to the Towns—That mercy and Bravery was the characteristock of the States of America—and that I should distinguish betwixt these Towns who had behaved well towards us; and others who had not done so, They have not sent to me since; but it seems more than Probable that the Proposals although really the Sentiments of three Towns, that the majority hoped to take me unguarded while a Treaty was on Foot. Six Indians were seen this day one six miles down the river where I crossed last night and four within half a mile of this Camp. I shall look

for an attack to-morrow. However I judge the enemy will be vexed and disconcerted at finding me here to-day. It will I dare say take me four or five days to reach the Towns as I must March Slow and always in order.

It is reported in the Towns that Stuart is sending 800 Creeks who are to be there in a few days. However be as it may I shall proceed and endeavour to have matters settled before I return.

General Rutherford has returned to the Senaka Towns somewhere about Keonee after laying waste \* \* \* the Valley, one of my \* \* \* \* say that he has sent a woman Prisoner with proposals of Peace, another says He has not. This is all I can hear But I believe it to be certain, he has returned. Perhaps another Flagg may come as the Indians say we travel as fast as them and seem very impudent. They attended me all the way from the Island but seldom came nearer than to hear the Tapping of the Drums, which was pretty constant, in order to keep the several lines in order.

It is now evening and I intend to March tomorrow by ten o'clock if possible. Should anything new occur before then I will add it.

I am sir your most obed. Servant,

WM. CHRISTIAN.

Capt. James McCall of South Carolina who was taken Prisoner the first day of July last by the Cherokees is now with me & a brave man. He has a wife and five children and wishes it to be Published in the Gazette that he is here and well, by this means it will get into the Carolina Paper & reach his family.

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Camp on French Broad River, Oct. 17, 1776.

May it Please your Excellency :

Yesterday about noon our whole Army arrived at the river but from the accounts Colo. Christian received from one Harland a white man who the Indians sent with a Flag of Truce, he did not think it prudent to attempt crossing in the day. Harland told us there were 7 or 800 Indians lying on the opposite



bank of the River, and that he overtook several parties of them as they came from their Towns, on their way to the river. About 8 o'clock at night Colo. Christian took about 1,100 men with him and marched down the river about 4 miles to a Ford the spies had discovered, though there was no appearance of its ever being used; crossed safe with all the men, and after a most surprising march through the woods arrived at the place the Indians were said to be at before sun rise. But instead of a general engagement as was expected, the banks of the river was found clear and no signs of more than three or four Indians. Upon which the Colo. ordered the rest of the army to cross which was done today and the whole in good order.

From the accounts Colo. Christian received to day from three men he had sent to the Cherokee Towns we have the greatest reason to expect an attack in a day or two. Our men are in high spirits and really wish for an attack that they may have it in their Power to Chastise the cruel villians.

I am sorry to tell your Excellency that from sickness and deaths I have not been able to bring but a little more than 300 men of the 2nd Battalion on this important expedition. The men being so very sickly while they were in the service below gave the people of the Counties that composed the Battalion such a distaste to the minute service that a very few new recruits could be raised by the officers. But the deficiency has been amply made up by the activity and good conduct of Colo. Christian in raising the men in the back Counties.

I am yr. Excellency's most obedient humble serv't,

CHAS. LEWIS.

To His Excellency Patrick Henry, Esq., Governor in Chief of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

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Bank of Broad River, Oct'r 15, 1776.

Hon'ble Sir:

I wrote to you yesterday evening what news I then had. This is a little after sun rise and I am preparing to march! About an hour after dark last night Captain Gist came in

with a Flag from the Raven Warriour to intercede for Chote. He seems to doubt my other Intelligence that the whole force was to fight me. He says from the answer I gave the first Flag that the Raven had hopes and had turned all he had influence over; the enemies forces were encamped about four miles from here; that when his party drew off the others followed, and that yesterday morning great numbers were moving off their families & corn. He says that Camron offered a great reward for his Head and the man who brought the first Flag. That he advises the Indians to burn their Towns and Corn; because they must then depend on him for ammunitions to get meat & by that means to continue the war. He says that one thousand of the Carolina Gide Indians are over on this side. He says that Camron will try to assemble them all somewhere about Highwassey & to defend that place or to bring them to fight. I intend to speak to some of the Warriours to catch him if possible. He says there are several small parties about us, who will do what harm they can, but that no General Battle will be fought except when I cross the Fences or towards Highwassey, if I follow there. He says that the whole people of the Valley and lower settlements have come over and quit that country. That their loss of men was very inconsiderable. I judge the Flag was only an excuse for him to get with me. I believe he is sorry for what he has done. I did intend to have him put in Irons, but the manner of his coming I believe will Prevent me. The officers tell me that the Camp is in great confusion about him, some think there are many favorable circumstances attending him—And many for killing him; of the last the Greatest part. I spoke but little to him & don't know whether he wants to go back or not. He says the Creeks are expected soon. I believe I shall push first for the Island Town & those who bred the war & have thoughts of sparing Chote.

I am sir Your mo. obet. & H'b'le Serv't,

WILLIAM CHRISTIAN.

To His Excellency Patrick Henry, Esq.,

Wms' Berg.

The Island Town,<sup>10</sup> Oct. 23d, 1776.

Hon'ble Sir:

I crossed the Tenessee on the 18th Instant passed through the Town of Toquo and encamped in the Town of Tornattee on the 19th I moved from Tornattee here after passing through the Town of Fuskeege & a Town on Tilliko river. This Island Town is about six miles from Toquo, where I crossed the River; and it is the lowest on the River except a new Town opposite to the lower end of it called Uivle. I met with no opposition in crossing the River and found the Indians had ran off hastily, some of them had shut their doors and some had not: they had carried off their cloathes & best of their Household goods but took but little provisions, the greatest part of them I judged went off in Canoes down the Tenessee. They left Horses, Cattle, Dogs, Hogs and Fowls, The crops of Corn and sweet potatoes are very great. It appears to me that in the Towns on this side of the Hills, there must be between forty and fifty thousand bushels of Corn and ten or fifteen thousand Bushels of Potatoes.

Harlin, the man who met me with the Flag at Broad river says that every party he delivered my answer to Turned about and ran home as quick as possible that he rode fast from Broad river to the Towns, and that some of them kept up with him on foot. That the next day after all the people in the Towns packed up and Fled; those that did not go down the river went to the Highwassey river, where there is a Town on the path to the Creeks, that Camron employed some of the Indians to kill him and Gist for being concerned in talking of peace; but tha he kept out of their way: on the 21st I sent two men towards Highwassey and two up this river in order to meet with some of the Indians & tell them that as they refused to fight I would now hear what the Raven and the other chiefs had to say.

The men that went towards Highwassey returned last nigh and informs me that ten miles from here they met an old woman and two children who had been there six days and nights in the woods without Fire or provisions other than Grapes and Hawes; the two men made them a Fire and gave them victuals

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<sup>10</sup> The Island Town appears to have been about thirty miles S. S. W from the present Knoxville.

they then proceeded ten miles farther and met a young man who had lost his wife and was then in search of her; as soon as they saw him they called to him to come in; which he clubbed his Gun & came up. His information was that the Indians were so much afraid that they would fly before us wherever we went that Camron had pushed off for the Creek Nation as soon as he knew I had crossed Broad river with only his own family and two or three of his wife's relations; one or two white men and a young woman daughter to one Captain Smith in South Carolina. She was taken prisoner by the Indians and bought by Camron from them. He treats her well; she told him when it was reported I was coming that she would run to the army as soon as she could; He answered she must not for the rebels would murder all without distinction.

I wrote to the Raven that, as he wished to speak to me I was now here and found His Nation would not Fight that I was willing to hear him & the other chiefs that I did not come to War with women and children but to Fight with men. That his people had better be upon their Guard, Because if they did not comply with my terms after seeing me that I should see them safe from my camp, and then consider them as enemies.

Three white men who had always been our friends with their wives and children and the woman and two children I mentioned above are to be in my camp this morning; they were within three miles last night. Tomorrow I expect the Raven Occunastota the Carpenter & many others of the chiefs, and I suppose that in three days after I can open a treaty or begin to destroy the Towns and pursue the Indians towards the Creeks. I know six that I could kill & take Hundreds of them, and starve hundreds by destroying their corn: but it would be mostly the women and children as the men could retreat faster than I can follow and I am convinced that the Virg'a State would be better pleased to hear that I showed pity to the distressed and spared the suppliants; rather than that I should commit one act of Barbarity in the destroying a whole nation of Enemies. I believe that all the old Warriours and all the women in the Nation on this side of the Hills were averse to the war; and that the rest were led on by Camron, sometimes by Bribing them and at others by threatening them a chief called the Dragon

Canoe lately raised to Power went to Mobile last spring & came from there with Henry Stuart, and through the Chickasaws where Gist joined them they brought in about Three thousand Pounds of good powder & a good deal of other presents. This chief was the principal agent in hastening the War. I came through other towns without touching any thing in them and am now destroying his. I intend to destroy some others that was under his influence whether I make peace or not, particularly a Town in which a man was burnt that was taken at Watuga.

It is said here that M. Wilkinson the Agent for South Carolina in lower Towns has all along corresponded with Camron & from several circumstances I believe it to be true. One McClean at Augusta Town in Georgia it is said has also corresponded with Camron. I find his intelligence has been pretty good. He told the Indians that the Carolina Armies would be about 4000 and the Virginia Army about 2000 men. When the Shawnese came here with the war belt they told these people that they meant to amuse the White people with treaties and then fall on them When unexpected. But amongst them there was not one chief or a man of note, nothing has been heard from them since.

When the Carpenter was at Mobile perhaps between three weeks & a month ago he was informed that the English men of war had taken a number of vessels belonging to the Continental Fleet near that place several small vessels were brought up to the Town and shewn him [illegible] as I hope in a week more to know what is to be done; I do not send this letter by a particular Express but by a few Drovers who intend to move their families to Kentucky this fall they will carry it to Botetourt from whence I will direct it to be sent by Express to Augusta or Bedford to which place a post comes with the News Papers. I have now written to the Commanding officer at the Great Island to let me know by Express whether the Shewnese has broke out or not.

I forgot to mention in any former letters that I had left with the Lieutenant of Botetourt 200 lb. Powder, with the Lieut. of Fincastle 300 lb. that I had distributed some amongst the Forts on Holston and that I had sent to the people of Harrodsburg on

the head of Salt river near Kentucky 100 lb. Powder & 176 lb. lead. I sent it by Capt. Harrod & Capt. Benj'a Logan who came unto the Inhabitants to procure some and followed me to the Island on Holston on that account. I expect to be in Botetourt by the 20th of November Whether I treat or not unless I am detained along the Fronteers of Fincastle and Botetourt by the Shawnese being broke out.

Mobile is an object worthy of the Publick's attention more so than Detroit. There is great quantities of Indian goods there. I hope to gather a good deal of information respecting the American affairs to the Southward before I go down. The report is here that the Indians say that they thought Colo. Henderson was sent by Government to buy land from them. The two members of the Convention that are with me will get what information they can about that affair as they expect to be at Wms' Burg early in December & reckons the Convention will not rise until Christmas or after it.

If the people can settle in peace I fear differences about land near the Carolina line will grow high if Something is not done about it.

I think these Towns are about 60 miles from Boundary betwixt Carolina & Virg'a when extended South Carolina formerly gave laws to the White people & regulated the Indian Trade but if No. Carolina is only one Degree wide it will take in Tenessee here. If North Carolina can take a Degree & half Which it is said by one of its officers with me; it will have a most valuable part of the back country. I like it better than the Virginia part of this side of Ohio.

I am Sir your most obed't Servant,

WILLIAM CHRISTIAN.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]